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Television

# TV News Dispute

ALBANY, N.Y. (UPI) — The Nixon administration was accused yesterday of making "one of the most ominous attacks yet" on freedom of information by trying to make local television stations responsible for network news programs they air.

"The White House plans to substitute its judgment on what is news and fair comment for the judgment of the public and the TV broadcasters," charged Robert G.Fichenberg, chairman of the freedom of information committee of the American Society of Newspaper Editors and executive editor of the Knickerbocker News-Union Star in Albany.

Proposed legislation was announced recently by Clay T. Whitehead, director of the White House Office of Telecommunications Policy, to correct what he called "imbalance or consistent bias in the networks."

"So far, the executive branch's technique had been an attempt to undermine the credibility of those segments of the Press that the administration has considered unfriendly,'" Fichenberg said.

The Whitehead announcement represents another weapon, he said: "The prospect of government control of TV news programming through the threat of withdrawing licenses from those stations that do not monitor network news programs to the administration's satisfaction.

"In what appears to be an attempt to coerce and entice local TV stations into accepting its plan, the administration is using the familiar carrot-and-stick technique," Fichenberg said.

"The carrot is the administration's proposal to extend the licensing period from three to four years if the stations will accept what amounts to government censorship.

"The stick is the threat that TV stations may lose their licenses if they don't go along.